

Listen

A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

J A N U A R Y 2 0 1 6

V O L 1 0 : I S S U E 1

WELCOMING PRESENCE

Hello is becoming a generous, living prayer in me. Waking up to the present time in order to be a welcoming presence to myself and others is an act of hospitality, and at times, a bumpy path of mystery and emergence. My son died nearly ten years ago, when he was sixteen years old. That spring, a few months after he died, he visited me in a dream. It was vivid; I recall it easily.

In the dream, I stood in my kitchen, and suddenly he was walking through the door from the circular entry way. My heart leapt with joy, and I cried out his name, "Justin!" But he looked gaunt and bruised; not my vibrant teenage son. Four or five people accompanied him. They were silent, appeared kind, and stood at a respectful distance. Justin was serious, said he wanted to talk to me. We walked into the living room, and sat down. He explained he was here because he could answer one question. I could ask any question I wanted, but only one. For the rest of my life.

I tossed and turned for hours that night, waking up, then back into the dream again. I consciously knew I had to get the question right. The immediacy of asking why he had died by suicide wasn't the question, nor were a dozen others I thought about. I wrestled with the weight of his greeting



Tufted Titmouse—*Baeolophus bicolor*

and invitation. Finally, I knew what I wanted to ask. In my dream, I walked back into the living room where he was seated on our leather sofa. I looked him in the eyes, and asked, "What do you want me to know?"

The question I asked opened a door to a *hello*, an exchange, which continues, even today. Open-ended, I became the student, the one who could learn, be curious, and stand at borders I couldn't yet comprehend. Open-ended, the conversation continues, and ripples into all my relationships. When I greet someone, I wonder, "Who are you?" and "What do you want me to know?" In a video interview with Spiritual Directors International for the *SDI Learns From ...* series, Krista Tippett, host of the *On-Being* radio show, said, "Questions elicit answers in their likeness. We can ask

questions and create spaces that lead to redemptive life-giving exchanges, and the responsibility is on the part of the listener, even before the listening begins. An openhearted question elicits an openhearted response." Tippett goes on to explain, "Listening is a way of honoring someone."

The intention and decision to listen, pay attention, greet ourselves, the world around us, and the Holy One or a higher power with a generous "hello" can be transformative.

A spiritual guide will greet us with a "hello," which inherently invites the generous question, "What do you want me to know?" Together, in this welcoming presence, you and I can experience honesty, mystery, forgiveness, hope, and possibility. We become courageous and trust vulnerability. Peace, harmony, and kindness toward ourselves and each other grows. 🌿

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- Field Guide: *Five Minute Practice of Presence*
- Field Notes: *Hello...*
- Poem: *Border Crossing*
- Global Resources
- Ask Owl



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FIELD GUIDE

FIVE MINUTE PRACTICE OF PRESENCE

Go to a place where you can be calm and quiet for five or more minutes. It could be outdoors, in your residence, office, or in a bathroom. Maybe you are traveling on a train, a bus, or plane. Wherever you are—*wherever you are*—is a place of presence.

MAKE IT SIMPLE.

Today you do not need candles, incense, music, or a prayer shawl. No fountain, icon, chair, or prayer beads. Just you and however you can show up, right now. The cosmos are big enough for all your joy, and all your sorrow. Just show up.

BREATHE.

Notice the texture and temperature of the air you inhale. Breathe enough oxygen to feel movement in your body. Expand your chest and belly.

EXHALE. LET GO.

Let go of everything that does not serve you or the integrity of the other. Let go of your to-do list, your monkey mind. The universe knows what to do with all *let-go's*. We don't have to do anything except *let go*.

BREATHE IN. BREATHE OUT. BREATHE OUT. BREATHE IN.

Allow each inhale to deepen, make every exhale deliberate. Say *hello* to feeling energy move and shift in your body as your cells oxygenate.

AWAKEN YOUR SENSES.

Be present to yourself and your surroundings. Notice what attracts your attention, and stay with that. While being present to what you notice with your awakened senses, simultaneously turn your attention to your breathing. Continue for as long as you desire. What do you notice?

DRAW IN THE DEEPEST BREATH OF YOUR DAY.

Perhaps the deepest breath of your life. Breathe gratitude. As you exhale, let go, and say *hello* to the present moment.

Allow your breath to companion you through your day. Say *hello* to yourself with your breath. Begin and end each night with the practice of presence. Whenever you experience stress, worry, or a desire to be present more completely to a person, place, idea, or the Holy One, take a five minute break. You know what to do. 🍃



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Join more than 6,000 people in an **inclusive**, global, contemplative, multi-faith learning community called Spiritual Directors International. For more than twenty-five years, SDI has been committed to compassionate listening around the world and across traditions. SDI inspires and connects seekers with spiritual guidance. Everyone who cares about spiritual companionship is invited to become a member of Spiritual Directors International, a nonprofit charity serving the educational needs of seekers and people who offer spiritual companionship. www.sdiworld.org



WHAT IS EVOKED IN YOU WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE A GENUINE HELLO? IT COULD BE A HELLO YOU OFFER, OR RECEIVE...

"A *hello* is a connection between souls. A spark that twinkles in the eyes or is reflected in tone of voice." —Bonnie

"Giving or receiving a genuine *hello* is a form of active human connection. You're intentionally allowing another person—or they are allowing you—to feel seen and acknowledged. There's something that's just inherently good about that." —Kelly

"The art of welcoming is an important art for building congregations and community. When I experience a genuine *hello*, I feel the soul connection. It is an affirmation of my complete being. In Hebrew, *shalom* means hello, goodbye, and peace. The root word *shalem* means complete. When our being feels whole we feel that relaxed state of peacefulness. Words can be powerful. Our prayers are words. They have a power. Just as bullying can be cruel words, the simple act of *hello* with the eyes to the soul meeting of one another brings connection. It is a healing that affirms our purpose on earth. The realms of heaven and earth meet in symbiotic oneness. We become one and

all seems well in the world." —Leslie

"*Hello* is like a smile, an invitation." —Christine

"When I was a kid, I remember my Grandma telling me that the way you walk, your posture, and how you greet people defines you as a man. Later I realized that she was talking about the way you carry yourself and how a friendly greeting brightens people's day, simply because they were recognized." —David

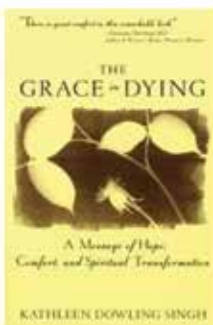
"A genuine *hello* from me is followed with a sincere smile. Sometimes I think a smile whether given or received is just as important as the words behind it." —Cindy

"*Hello* is a perfect way to acknowledge a stranger and treat them like a friend." —Hilary

"If it's a happy, smiley, I missed you type of *hello*, it's the best feeling and can change the whole atmosphere. If it's a growly, grumpy *hello*, it hurts." —Erin

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FIELD NOTES, CONTINUED

"Hello with a genuine smile is a shared moment of warmth."
—Kelly

"When I experience a genuine *hello* I feel a warmth inside, and I become more fully present to the person who has offered the genuine *hello*. It is a gift and I automatically feel drawn to that person." —Randi

"I'm so happy to be living on the Big Island of Hawaii. It's never *hello*, it's *aloha* with a hug and kissing cheeks—just like when I was an exchange student in Turkey. Physically saying *hello*, with that kind of a greeting, truly breaks down barriers and expresses sincere intent in communication." —Natasha

"A smile and *hello* that we share with everyone creates positive connection and friendship. We need lots more people in the world like this!" —Bill

"My Grandpa modeled an outgoing, even brave, *hello* to strangers that I'm still trying to emulate. He was bold and curious and knew each person he met held stories he wanted to know. Even more profound for me was an experience related to my grandpa's *hellos* that I had many years ago that

set off a huge time of spiritual expansion for me. One day, while walking a trail in Dana Point, California, USA, I said *hello* to some strangers walking by. I immediately recognized my grandpa's (long passed away) voice, intonation, and energy in my greeting. I began to cry and feel his presence deeply. We communicated and he began leading me on a deep and brave journey into the next part of my mystical walk. That afternoon, after my walk, I was pulling out photos from an old album for my friend's fortieth birthday, and out fell a small note from my grandfather for my college graduation that I barely even remembered he wrote to me. It said he was proud of me and blessed my journey ahead." —Michelle

"A genuine *hello* for me makes my heart smile. In return, I try to always keep in mind that a hello with a smile might be the only positive interaction that person might have had that day!" —Eli

"When someone looks me in the eyes and says *hello*, it gives me a genuine sense of being, and makes me smile!" —Jerilee

"A friendly *hello* lifts me up and makes me feel happier."
—Jim

What does *hello* evoke in you? ...

May your experience of hello bring delight, belonging, healing, intrigue, and connection to life.

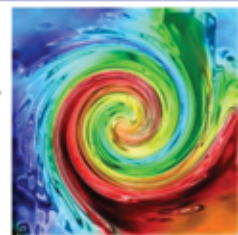
Listen

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and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 6,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at www.sdiworld.org.

Border Crossing

The photo of your favourite
baseball slugger sliding
into home plate, the arms
of the umpire lifted
to the heavens, stops you dead
in your tracks, as if
you've been lassoed neatly
around the ankles.
You meet your friend
in the park as planned,
and for some unknown reason
she quietly places her cheek
against yours, holding
it for several beats
after she says a quiet hello.
Moments like these,
where life lifts you
and deposits you
wildly and joyfully
across your usual borders
into some other place,

are unexpected gift.
There are obvious, delicious times
when wonder transports us—
like sunrises, sunsets,
baby's bums, and Jo Malone's
lime basil and mandarin perfume—
but it's the ordinary,
unexpected
border-crossing invitations
that are the most humbling.
When you are here, you look
around and say *aah*, and wish
you could step across by choice;
frequently.
For the clarity in this space-between,
is the edge where mystery
is most present, where your usual
way of being is thrown to the winds,
where, quite naked, you are brought
to your knees in reverence.

—Jennifer (Jinks) Hoffmann, 2015

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ASK OWL

Question: "I would like to welcome a deeper spiritual connection and direction in my life. I have a sense I'm in transition, and something in me desires more meaning and wholeheartedness in my life and relationships. Can a spiritual director be of assistance? And, how can I find someone?"



global listing of more than 6,000 spiritual directors and guides.

● **Watch** a YouTube video to learn how to find a spiritual director or guide, and learn more about spiritual direction. Click on the *Resources* tab, then click on *Videos* to view YouTube videos produced by Spiritual

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● **Participate** in a FREE one hour teleconference "Spiritual Direction 101" on 23 February 2016, at 12:00 EST; 5:00 GMT/UTC. To RSVP go to the *Educational Events* tab, then click *Upcoming Educational Events*. Or look for the announcement on the SDI homepage.

Finding a spiritual director is a very personal and spiritual quest. To aid in your discernment process it may be helpful for you to contact and interview two or three spiritual directors.

Blessings to you in this time of searching for what is significant in your life and the deeper connections you long to greet and explore.

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiworld.org.

Hoot Hoot: Thank you for e-mailing your question. First off, yes! And, you are not alone. By asking this question, it means that you can trust your inner longing and guidance to welcome something more into your life, which may even be a bit mysterious to you. Honor your desire. Start by exploring resources and find a spiritual director or guide to accompany you. If you need help to begin, many helpful hints are available to you on the Spiritual Directors International website. Visit www.sdiworld.org.

● **Review** the resources and helpful hints on the SDI website. From the homepage, click the *Seekers* box. Make sure to read *Find a Spiritual Director*; and explore other resources.

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